

BRIEFS

SBC ANNUAL MEETING SHOWCASED IN VIDEO

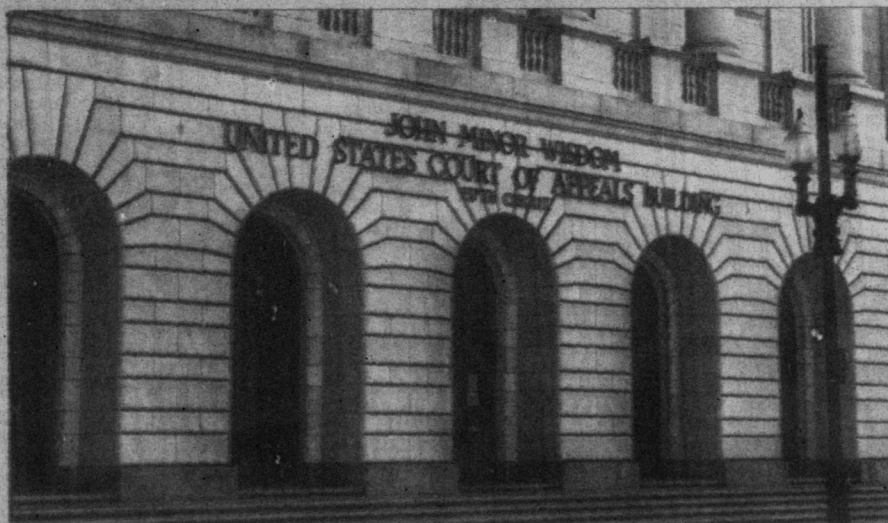
PHOENIX (BP) — Prayer and soul-winning are highlighted in a brief video of the 2017 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting June 13-14 in Phoenix. High praise, brief interviews, and video captions of Southern Baptist leaders and members comprise the video, along with the SBC's growing diversity in leadership is captured in African American and Hispanic pastors and officers. The two-and-a-half-minute video, produced by communications staffers at SBC president Steve Gaines' Bellevue Church in Cordova, TN, is available for viewing and download at Bellevue.org, sbc.net through mid-July, and at sbcannualmeeting.net.

MISSIONS DIRECTORS SEEKING NEW TITLE

PHOENIX (BP) — A study group of the Southern Baptist Conference of Association Leaders (SBCAL) is expected to recommend at the organization's 2018 meeting a new title, credentialing process, and expectations of effectiveness for directors of missions (DOMs). The group, meeting in Phoenix prior to the start of the 2017 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, elected Philip Price, executive director of Jackson County Association in Pascagoula, to serve as recording secretary.

FIRST HUNGER RUN RAISES ALMOST \$4K

A total of 189 registrants participated in the first Global Hunger Relief Run on the second day (June 14) of the 2017 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Phoenix. Nearly \$4,000 was raised toward feeding the hungry in the United States and throughout the world. Global Hunger Relief (GHR) is a partnership of seven Southern Baptist entities that collaborate to address hunger needs. One hundred percent of gifts received by GHR, whether through churches, a run's registration fees, or other activities is used in hunger projects implemented by Southern Baptist missionaries and partners.



FREEDOM OF RELIGION — The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans invalidated an injunction June 22 allowing HB 1523 to take effect. (Photo by Shutterstock.com/Rex Wholster)

Religious freedom law in effect

HB 1523 injunction no longer valid after Fifth Circuit ruling

By William H. Perkins Jr.
Editor

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit in New Orleans on June 22 invalidated a Jackson federal judge's preliminary injunction by dismissing the lawsuit

that had prevented the much-debated House Bill (HB) 1523 from going into effect that protects people with sincerely-held religious beliefs from being forced to become involved in LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) lifestyles.

HB 1523, known as the Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act, was passed by the Republican-controlled Mississippi Legislature during the 2016 regular session and signed into law shortly after the session by Governor Phil Bryant, a Republican in his second term.

Bryant and lawmakers have since come under intense local and national criticism for backing the bill, which allows religious people to decline to

see HB 1523 on p. 5

Pastors conduct historic election

PHOENIX (BP) — The 2017 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Pastors' Conference in Phoenix, held June 12 prior to the start of the 2017 SBC annual meeting, proved historic on many levels — including the unanimous election of the conference's first African American president.

H.B. Charles Jr., pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Church in Jacksonville, FL, was unanimously elected president after his nomination by Ken Whitten, pastor of Idlewild Church in Lutz, FL.

"I want to be real clear about one thing," Whitten pointed out. "I am not nominating H.B. Charles because of the color of his skin. I'm suggesting that he be the conference president because of the character of his soul and the convictions of his spirit."

CHARLES

see PASTORS on p. 8

Mission: Dignity buoys retirees

COBBS CREEK, Va. (BP) — Robert Baker has learned a few things during 91 years of life — and more than a half-century in ministry:

■ Don't complain about tough times or hard work. Listen, learn, and trust the Lord.

■ Preach the Bible and love people.

■ Do what you're told when God (or someone He sends into your life) tells you to do it.

"It's all part of the call," Baker explains. He learned obedience early, growing up as a farm boy in Depression-era North Carolina.

His father didn't issue commands twice. There were chores to do every morning before the mile-and-a-half walk to the



ROBERT BAKER

see RETIREES on p. 8

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

No time for rest

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit injected some sanity into the debate over religious freedom rights when a three-judge panel on June 22 threw out a lawsuit because none of the plaintiffs had been harmed.

The details of their decision can be found elsewhere in this issue of *The Baptist Record*, but let's conduct a quick review for the purposes of this commentary. In the 2016 regular session of the Mississippi Legislature, senators passed House Bill (HB) 1523 entitled, *Protecting Freedom of Conscience from Government Discrimination Act*. Section 2 of the bill set forth three principles on which the bill was written:

■ Marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman.

■ Sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage.

■ Male (man) or female (woman) refer to an individual's immutable biological sex as objectively determined by anatomy and genetics at time of birth.

Those seem like perfectly logical and common sense statements by which we can pursue life, liberty, and happiness. That's no longer the case, so legislators felt the need to protect the state's religious citizens from being forced to involve themselves in the practices of the lifestyles of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) citizens.

Governor Phil Bryant promptly signed HB 1523 into law, and LGBT supporters promptly filed a lawsuit against it. U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves, an appointee of Democrat former U.S. President Barack Obama, issued a preliminary injunction that prevented HB 1532 from going into effect.

Last week, the Fifth Circuit panel dismissed the lawsuit and thereby dissolved the preliminary injunction. They explained that in the federal court system, plaintiffs must prove they were harmed (as legally defined). The judges said the plaintiffs in the HB 1523 lawsuit had not shown they had been harmed.

Now back to the present. LGBT supporters who were involved in the lawsuit have promised to appeal the judges' ruling. If that

falls, they said, they have other lawsuits waiting in the wings. It's a never-ending cycle.

Along the same line on the national level, the U.S. Supreme Court has announced that the justices will yet again take up a similar case on appeal from the state of Colorado. It seems a cake shop owner there has had the heavy hand of government come down on him because he declined to create a wedding cake for the same sex wedding of two homosexuals.

The extra-judicial Colorado Commission of Civil Rights administratively declared the owner guilty of discrimination based on sexual orientation and ordered him to change his policies, pay for training (indoctrination?) of employees, and produce quarterly reports to the commission for two years to verify the progress he is making.

John Eastman, a professor and former dean at Chapman University's Fowler School of Law in Orange Ca., believes the cake shop has a strong free speech case. He told FoxNews.com in a June 27 interview that the owner's work is "expressive conduct" covered by the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment.

"Whether it's a photographer, or a cake maker, or a T-shirt designer," he told FoxNews.com, "they're engaged in expressive activity."

The dean of the University of California's Irvine School of Law disagrees. In the same FoxNews.com article, Erwin Chemerinsky argued that the expressive activity in this case comes from the homosexual customers and not the baker.

"If I choose the words on my cake, I'm engaging in expression. The baker is simply putting my words on a cake," he said in the article.

All of this is indicative of the fact that there is no time for rest. Keep your seat belt buckled and your prayer life active on this issue, Christian friends. We're nowhere near the end. The strong forces of secularism, nihilism, and a bunch of other Satan-inspired "isms" are at war with us.

In the immortal words of Sabine Baring-Gould from 1865, "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

Why read about missionaries?

We generally consider seeking counsel to be approaching the "gray-beards" in our lives — those who are older, who walk closely with God, who have made wise decisions in their own lives — and asking them their thoughts on a matter.

Yet, counsel also comes from even older saints as well. I love to read missionary biographies and I always have one or more going. Reading missionary biographies is another way to seek counsel that allows us to peer into the lives of those who went before us, who ran the race and finished well, and to glean wisdom and insights that we need for decision-making and growing in personal discipleship.

Here are five reasons why reading missionary biographies is wise and helpful to gain counsel from those who went before us.

Embracing a call

We are able to "watch" other missionaries struggle with their call to missions and learn how their family members came to accept this new life the Lord had given them. There is something powerful about overhearing another's call to ministry that puts our own in perspective. It is amazing how much we can relate to a brother or sister from a former time as they walked or wrestled with the biblical, theological, practical, and logistical concerns connected to accepting a call. We almost sense that we are walking with them as they leave their lives that had been so planned out in order to embrace radical abandon to the newly discerned will of God.

Getting started

We find Christian companionship as we walk with others through their search to find a sending agency and answer objections from their dearest relations regarding their "crazy" decision to leave for missionary service in foreign lands.

The hard times

We are encouraged when we read of their disappointments, setbacks, frustra-



Guest opinion
with David Sills

tions, and how ministry-stopping challenges melt away through their perseverance and persistent trust in God.

Sometimes a pastor whom missionaries had poured into for years, spent long hours to disciple, and promoted among others as the "real deal" falls away and returns to the world. At other times the new couple who had answered the call to join them in the work is turned back by a family crisis or denied visas by bureaucratic red tape. Knowing that others before us faced and overcame similar setbacks can encourage us along the way.

Recovery from sin

While many new missionaries are well-versed in biblical teaching about living the Christian life, reading missionary biographies allows us to see "Christianity with skin on." Reading of occasions when they sinned, lost their cool, became frustrated with or separated from other missionaries or nationals, but then pressed through to the grace side of it all gives us hope.

Missions education

Missionaries in the past faced many of the same cultural, missiological, methodological, and relational challenges every missionary will face. Reading the stories of their lives provides a missions education that is more than mere speculation. It is the actual story of receiving and giving grace over and over again, finding the keys to reaching and teaching new cultures, and planting churches in gospel-hostile places.

see SILLS on p. 8

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Deportations of Christians troubling evangelicals

WASHINGTON (BP and local reports) — Southern Baptists are joining other evangelical leaders in urging the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump to stop the deportation of Christians to Iraq.

Russell Moore, president of Southern Baptists' Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, and six other leaders asked John Kelly, secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in a letter June 19 to end the deportations until Iraq's government can protect religious minorities.

Recent reports have indicated the federal government has started the process of deporting Chaldean Christians back to their homeland, where the United States government has designated as genocide the murderous campaign of the Islamic State (also known as ISIS).

The Chaldean Catholic Church was originally composed of Assyrians who broke from the Assyrian Church of the East in the Schism of 1552 and entered into communion with the Roman Catholic Church. The church has no direct relation to the ancient country of Chalde, which existed in the southeastern region of Mesopotamia from about 1000-600 B.C.

"We write urgently and with grave concern that Christians will be removed from the United States to face potential persecution, and even death, in the Middle East," said the leaders, who represent the eight organizations that



comprise the Evangelical Immigration Table (EIT).

While the letter signers said they are encouraged by the Trump administration's emphasis on protecting the rights of religious minorities globally, they requested the administration "exercise the discretion available under law to defer the deportation of Chaldeans who pose

no threat to U.S. public safety to Iraq until such time as the situation in Iraq stabilizes and its government proves willing and capable of protecting the rights of religious minorities."

They urged Kelly "to take the same approach to any individual, regardless of whether they share our Christian faith or not, who does not pose a threat to the

safety of Americans and for whom deportation would be likely to result in persecution, torture, or death."

The U.S. deported some Iraqis to their home country in April and is scheduled to deport about 1,400 more, according to Christianity Today magazine.

Officials of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) service arrested about 40 Chaldean Christians June 11 in the Detroit metro area, the Detroit Free Press reported. Chaldean Christians fear they will be targets of Islamic extremists if deported to Iraq.

"These deportations should be stopped immediately. We should be protecting these imperiled people, not surrendering them up for execution," Moore said.

The Evangelical Immigration Roundtable is a coalition of evangelical organizations supporting immigration reform. Also signing onto the letter to Kelly were Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference in Sacramento, Ca.; Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals in Washington, D.C.; Scott Arbeiter, president of World Relief in Baltimore, Md.; Shirley Hoogstra, president of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in Washington, D.C.; Hyepin Im, president of the Korean Churches for Community Development in Los Angeles, Ca.; and Jo Anne Lyon, ambassador and general superintendent emerita of The Wesleyan Church based in Fishers, Ind.

Many salvations at Crossover Phoenix/Harvest America

PHOENIX (BP) — More than 700 voices worshiped June 9 at North Phoenix Church in Phoenix to kick off the weekend's Crossover Arizona and Harvest America events prior to the start of the 2017 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Crossover Arizona, supported by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board (NAMB), and Greg Laurie's Harvest America ministry joined forces to host a three-day evangelistic outreach involving training, street evangelism, and service projects before culminating in Harvest America's Sunday night crusade.

By the end of that evening, Harvest reported 2,904 salvation decisions with another 494 indicating decisions online.

"Welcome to Crossover," said Jason Powell, pastor at Harvest Christian Fellowship, during Crossover's Friday-evening gathering. "This is for you to learn tips and tactics to tell someone else about Jesus. While we're excited about the opportunity for 35,000 people to hear the Gospel at the crusade, it's very important we learn how to share and get out there every day."

Powell was one of three key speakers at Crossover's opening night of worship along with Levi Lusko, pastor of Fresh Life Church, and Laurie, senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship. The speakers shared testimonies, techniques, and training for one-on-one evangelism that attendees could use to deliver the Gospel simply and powerfully.

"You were brought to Phoenix. You were brought to Arizona. You were brought here for such a time as this,"

Lusko said, "so get ready to go forth from this moment different, ready for something to happen."

Fifty Crossover volunteers gathered June 10 to fix up Arizona homes. They repaired plumbing, cleaned houses, painted walls and landscaped yards during the Love in Action service project at several transitional houses owned by Dream City Church and its affiliate, Dream Center.

One homeowner, Ryan Dubia, and his wife Alexandra worked alongside volunteers sweating in unison in the 98-degree heat.

"Our house was a blessing," Dubia said. "It gave me and my wife Alex a break when we got our lives together and stopped using drugs. We've been clean for 22 months. This house, and the opportunity to have it maintained by volunteers, is a relief for our soon-to-be family of four."

The day wasn't over for Crossover participants. As the sun set the streets of Phoenix, Glendale, Scottsdale, and Ave Mesa filled with groups sharing the Gospel during the Tell Someone evangelism portion of Crossover.

Steve Gaines, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and pastor of Memphis-area Bellevue Church in Cordova, Tenn., served alongside his wife Donna and Southwestern Seminary students and alumni Saturday night in Glendale.

Southwestern students had hit the streets earlier in the week to begin their annual evangelism efforts in conjunction with Crossover and the SBC annual meeting.

Gaines also preached at First Church in Chandler on Sunday. "With our group,



GO FORTH — Brandon Kiesling, instructor of evangelism at Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, gives last-minute instructions to 75 Southwestern students gathered for Crossover Phoenix at Arizona Christian University in Phoenix before they disperse in teams to share the Gospel. (BP photo)

we visited over 1,000 homes," he said. "We had well over 200 Gospel conversations and were out for about three to four hours. We had a great time."

Frank S. Page, past president of the SBC who now serves as president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, also participated June 10 in door-to-door evangelism with First Southern Baptist Church at Sahuaro Ranch Park and Southwestern students.

On June 11, he preached two sermons at Mountain Ridge Church's Arrowhead campus in Glendale.

"I was delighted to go with a group of students from Southwestern Seminary, my alma mater, in sharing the Gospel,"

Page said. "I did not get to lead anyone to Christ, but I did have several great Gospel conversations. I have participated in Crossover for many years and love the privilege."

The weekend's events came to a crescendo Sunday night as approximately 38,000 gathered to hear the good news of Jesus live at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale. Another 3,000 host sites joined online.

"The goal of Harvest America is to impact a nation," Lusko said. "Everyone wants hope and is longing to have the hole inside them filled up. Everyone is clutching for meaning, and we have the answer!"

Since we are only days away from the celebration of our nation's birth — July 4, that grand day when we celebrate the blessings of God upon America — I wanted to pass along some thoughts about this great land from whence we have come and the direction we may go. To use the phrase, "God bless America," is to call forth thoughts of the great song of the same name, but more than just a tune it is an attitude toward the God that we are asking Him to bless us. Clearly, through these centuries of national life God has blessed America. From our birth in 1776 when 56 men signed a short document declaring that we would be independent and free, through the eight years of war that followed and the blood that was shed to purchase our freedom — including the 25,000 men who died in securing our independence — God has blessed America.

Prior to the Declaration of Independence, it is interesting as sometimes history points out that from about 1725 - 1750, incredible revival fires covered the land. Preachers like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield preached the Word of God with power, conviction, and love. Out of the incredible outpourings of God, a nation would be born. God has blessed America from the earliest days.

While that is essential to be remembered, I want to focus our attention for a moment on today and a verse of Scripture that God gave to His people in Second Chronicles 7:14. Many of you could recite it without reading it, but God said, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." The application of that verse clearly needs to be refreshed and refocused in America today. There are four unmistakable points



God Bless America

that God makes as he speaks to His people in that verse.

The first point is to **recognize**. When I say recognize, God says, "If my people will humble themselves..." God cannot and will not bless haughty arrogance. It is one of the things God hates, according to Proverbs 6. He looks for a humble spirit, one that will recognize He is God and we are not. When we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, He promises to lift us and bless us, but we must recognize that humbleness is necessary. While you can find people with a proud, arrogant attitude in almost every area of life, it is not a feature God will bless. "If my people will humble themselves..." is the call from heaven.

There was a day when America was known as a Christian nation. We thought of ourselves that way, but in the swift passing of just a few decades it has become hard to imagine that we were ever that and it's equally hard to believe what we have become. There is less and less

respect for Christian influences. More and more, you find secularism, humanism, and the rejection of God as a way of life — but don't be mistaken. God still has a people and He has a people in America. Those who call on the name of the Lord, the living God, need to humble themselves. We need Him, but He needs us to recognize that it is only in humility that He can bless us.

The second point is to **agonize** — pray. It is a prayer that is far beyond just a rote reciting of some memorized thoughts. It is the kind of prayer that has intention, intensity, and urgency to cry out to God. I believe it was Abraham Lincoln who said something to the effect that he liked to hear a man pray like that man had a broken leg. That is a sort of visual picture of somebody getting serious about being in touch with God. God says if we will come to Him in prayer and surrendered yieldedness, He will listen to us.

The third point is to **prioritize** seeking His face. Popular singer Kenny

Rogers' old song says, "I spent a lifetime reading people's faces." To seek the face of God is to be willing to be so attuned to Him, to see Him, to understand what He wants, that we simply do what He asks. It's not just to look at Him, but it's also to focus on Him and not on us. It is to see and say we want God's will to be done. That is seeking His face. Too many times personally, and too often in our churches, we want our will to be done and our way of doing things. The priority is to let God have His way in us.

There is a church in South Carolina named, "Jesus Only Church." Some years ago, Hurricane Hugo blew off a few of the letters on the church's sign to read, "Us Only Church." Sadly, that could define our lives and our churches. We must make a priority of looking to Him.

Fourth, we must **individualize**. God says for us — for me, for you — to turn. What is it in your life that needs to be turned so that God can bless and use you? It becomes very individual for each one of us. You and I must decide if we are willing to turn. If we don't, we for sure become a stumbling block to others. Years ago, a blind man living on the streets would every night light the lantern he kept. He could not see, but he lit the lantern because, he said, "It's so easy for people to stumble on me in the darkness." You and I need to get our lives in line. Being aligned with God is to turn from our way to His way so we won't be a stumbling block but rather an encouragement, a blessing, and a help to other people seeking to turn toward God.

God bless America. He has and will bless this great nation if we listen to Him, turn to Him, and let Him have His way in us.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Vacation Bible School



Griffith Memorial Church, Jackson, celebrated VBS June 5 - 9. There were 230 participants.



PINE FOREST CHURCH, COLLIERVILLE, hosted VBS June 5 - 9, 8 - 11:45 a.m. daily. During commencement June 9, interim pastor Wayne Edwards and VBS co-directors Keely Followay and Marie Roberts presented Baptist Children's Village executive director Sean Milner with a check for \$2350.30 as well as more than 100 paper product donations.

Upcoming VBS Dates:
 > Center Church, Blue Springs: July 10 - 14, 6 - 8:30 p.m.

BIBL i O C I P H E R

RLV EM E TU RLV DOBDRB R DNRSB
 MUO KUH, E QENN SUYB RTREL, RLV
 OBSBEFB KUH HLPY YKXBNM; PCRP
 QCBOB E RY, PCBOB KB YRK GB RNXU.
 AUCL MUHOPBBL: PCOBB

Clue: T = G

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark 10:15

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Ebenezer Church, Lexington:** Revival and homecoming, July 9 - 12; Sun., 11 a.m. and dinner and worship nightly with dinner @ 6 p.m. and worship @ 7 p.m.; Wayne Hudson, speaker; Alisa Drake, pianist; special musical guests and testimonies each service.
 ► **Hathorn Church, Colum-**

bia: Revival, July 9 - 12; Sun., 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; James Messer, speaker; Duke and Linda Barnes, worship leaders; Wade Barnes, pastor.
 ► **Eden Church, Stringer:** Revival, July 9 - 12; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. nightly.

In much-anticipated case, high court rules for church

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. Supreme Court struck a blow June 26 for the freedom of churches to participate in government programs with secular purposes.

Seven of the high court's nine justices agreed the State of Missouri violated a church's right to exercise its faith freely by barring it from participating in a government-run, playground-resurfacing program. In its opinion, the court said excluding Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia "from a public benefit for which it is otherwise qualified, solely because it is a church, is odious" to the U.S. Constitution.

David Cortman, senior counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom who argued before the court in late April on behalf of Trinity Lutheran as, said the

opinion "affirms the common-sense principle that government isn't neutral when it treats religious organizations worse than everyone else."

The Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville filed a friend-of-the-court brief with the high court in support of Trinity Lutheran.

The church-state case involved the State of Missouri's Scrap Tire Grant Program, which provides grants to non-profit organizations for safer, rubberized surfaces for children's playgrounds. The state rejected the application of Trinity Lutheran Church Learning Center because of its affiliation with the church.

Chief Justice John Roberts acknowledged both parties in the case agreed the First

Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion, known as the establishment clause, does not bar the state from including Trinity Lutheran in the program. Yet, Missouri's rule violates the same amendment's free exercise clause based on the court's previous rulings, he said.

"The express discrimination against religious exercise here is not the denial of a grant, but rather the refusal to allow the church — solely because it is a church — to compete with secular organizations for a grant," Roberts wrote.

"In this case, there is no dispute that Trinity Lutheran is put to the choice between being a church and receiving a government benefit," he said. "The rule is simple: No churches need apply."

The father-and-son law team of Michael and Jonathan Whitehead — Southern Baptists and co-counsel for Trinity Lutheran who practice in the Kansas City area — also praised the ruling.

"Free exercise does not just protect the right to pray and worship in private," Mike Whitehead said in a written release. "Free exercise means the right to live out one's faith in the public square, and to participate fully as citizens, including public benefit programs."

Jonathan Whitehead called the 7-2 vote from what is normally a sharply-divided court "very encouraging about the strength of this principle on the current Court."

In the majority in addition to Roberts were Associate Justices Anthony Kennedy, Clarence

Thomas, Samuel Alito, and Neil Gorsuch, Stephen Breyer, and Elena Kagan.

Associate Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, strongly dissented from the majority.

In its ruling, the court changed the relationship between the institutions of the church and state "by holding, for the first time, that the Constitution requires the government to provide public funds directly to a church," Sotomayor wrote. "Its decision slights both our precedents and our history, and its reasoning weakens this country's longstanding commitment to a separation of church and state beneficial to both."

Strict-separationist and secularist organizations criticized the court's decision.

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HB 1523

cont. from p. 1

be a part of business deals and government transactions involving those who practice LGBT lifestyles, if they sincerely believe their religious beliefs prevent them from doing so.

Examples from other parts of the country include providing flowers and decorations for same sex weddings and the granting of government marriage licenses for such events.

Section 2 of HB 1523 establishes, "The sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions protected by this act are the belief or conviction that: (a) Marriage is or should be recognized as the union of one man and one woman; (b) Sexual relations are properly reserved to such a marriage; and (c) Male (man) or female (woman) refer to an individual's immutable biological sex as objectively determined by anatomy and genetics at time of birth."

Pro-LGBT groups fought the bill as it moved through the two chambers of the Legislature, and urged Bryant to veto the measure. Upon Bryant's signature approving the bill, a lawsuit was filed to have the law invalidated as discriminatory.

U.S. District Judge Carlton Reeves of Jackson, an appointee of Democrat former U.S. President Barack Obama, agreed with detractors that the bill unconstitutionally favored one religious viewpoint and granted a preliminary injunction on June 30, 2016, to prevent the law from going into effect.

When Mississippi Attorney General Jim Hood, a Democrat, refused to file an appeal with the Fifth Circuit, Bryant found outside attorneys with the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) organization in Scottsdale, Az., to move his appeal forward. ADF had earlier assisted with the writing

of the bill and other aspects of its passage.

The Fifth Circuit's three-judge panel ruled on June 22 of this year, "Under this current record, the plaintiffs have not shown an injury-in-fact caused by HB 1523 that would empower the district court or this court to rule on its constitutionality."

The judges dismissed the lawsuit, thereby dissolving the preliminary injunction.

Kenny Digby, executive director-treasurer of the Christian Action Commission in Jackson, lauded the state's leaders for HB 1523 and expressed gratitude for the judicial system that ruled in favor of the law.

"There are many things we must tolerate in a free society, but we should not be forced to condone anything that violates our convictions," Digby said. "HB 1523 protects private business owners, religious entities, and even public servants, and allows them to stay consistent with their conscience and biblical world view."

Andy Gipson, pastor of Gum Springs Church, Braxton, an attorney, and one of the sponsors of HB 1523 in his capacity as state representative, said, "I was encouraged to read the Fifth Circuit panel's order reversing last year's injunction against House Bill 1523. As the Court noted the bill provides state law protections against government violation of Mississippians' freedom of religion and exercise thereof."

"Under this bill, Mississippi pastors, churches, nonprofits, and people of faith cannot be forced by the government to provide wedding-related services violating their sincere religious convictions."

The law's opponents have vowed to appeal the Fifth Circuit's dismissal and to move forward with other legal action if the current lawsuit fails. Under court rules, they have two weeks to file an appeal of the three-judge panel's decision.

HB 1523 Sponsors

Rep. Philip Gunn
(House Speaker)
Dist. 56, Clinton

Rep. Tracy Arnold
Dist. 3, Booneville

Rep. Scott Bounds
Dist. 44, Philadelphia

Rep. Lester Carpenter
Dist. 1, Burnsville

Rep. Andy Gipson
Dist. 77, Braxton

Rep. William Shirley
Dist. 84, Quitman

Rep. Randy Boyd
Dist. 19, Mantachie

Rep. Dan Eubanks
Dist. 25, Walls

Fifth Circuit Panel

Judge Jerry E. Smith
(Texas)
appt. by R. Reagan

Judge Catharina Haynes
(Texas)
appt. by G.W. Bush

Judge Jennifer W. Elrod
(Texas)
appt. by G.W. Bush

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Just for the Record



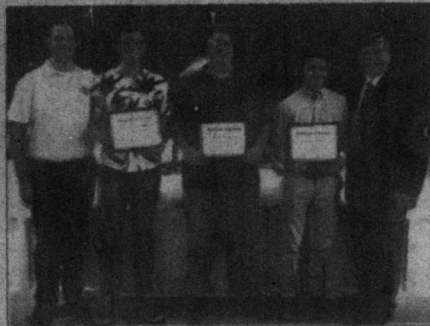
The RA's at **FIRST CHURCH, FLORA**, held their annual derby race for missions on May 24. The boys raised \$500 for supplies to take on a summer mission trip.



ETHEL CHURCH, ETHEL, recognizes its high school graduates. From left, Loren Steed, Shelby Moore, Avery Bouchillon, Kamrie Upchurch, Austin Odom, Kevin Moore, Hailey Sprayberry, and pastor Ralph Hunt. Not pictured are Ethan Butler and Tanner Steen.



CEDAR GROVE CHURCH, LEAKESVILLE, celebrated a combined total of 90 years of ministry June 18. Rita Walley has served as pianist for 50 years and Hilda Smith has served as organist for 40 years.

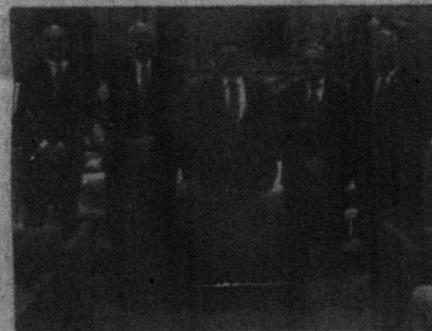


SEMINARY CHURCH, SEMINARY, licensed three students to the gospel ministry May 28. Austin Aultman, Mitch Coulter, and Cody Fairchild will be attending William Carey University in the fall. Shown are Associate Pastor: Students/Discipleship Colby Lambert, Aultman, Coulter, Fairchild, and pastor Tim Hubbard.

In other Church News:

► The Houston Road Boys will be in concert at **Corinth Church, Heidelberg**, July 15, 6 p.m. Love offering.

► **Big Level Church, Wiggins**, is hosting a reception honoring David Perry on the occasion of his retirement from 50+ years as a pastor July 15, 2 p.m.



CALVARY CHURCH, MERIDIAN, ordained four men as deacons June 11. Shown are Chad Johnson, Billy Rogers, Lawrence Hunter, and Terry Moore. Tom Belcher, pastor.



CALVARY CHURCH, VICKSBURG, recognizes preschoolers Bryceton Harrison, Faith Wilkerson, and Korbin Foster going into first grade, and Mission Friend Kerya Bolls for all her badges earned.

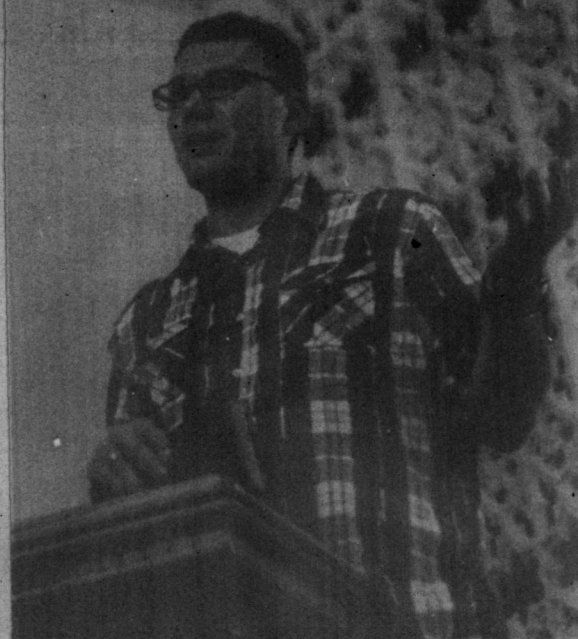


The youth of **CENTER CHURCH, BLUE SPRINGS**, attended Summer MissionFUGE camp in Barboursville, Ky., June 12 - 16. Shown are the participants.



EPHESUS CHURCH, FOREST, held baccalaureate services May 21. Shown are pastor Chris Harrison, graduate Wilson Bell, and Tanya Harrison.

WHERE WILL GOD'S CALL TAKE YOU?



NEW ORLEANS

BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Staff Changes



▲ **WADE CHURCH, MOSS POINT**, has called Branden Rogers as pastor. He is shown with his wife Hanna and children Jacob, Justin, Laurie Kate, and Taylor. They come from Poultney, Vt.

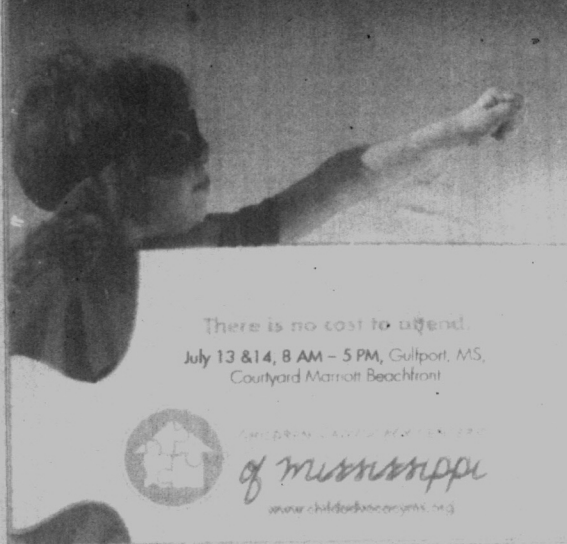


◀ **WEST MARKS CHURCH, MARKS**, called Kendall J. White as pastor May 7.

Q. HOW DOES ABUSE AFFECT SPIRITUALITY?

A. Abuse wounds the spirit and leaves scars for life. Abuse and neglect can violate every part of a child's mind, soul and body. The Chaplains for Children Training can provide the tools Churches need to model the love of Christ while listening and guiding children through the journey of coping and living more fully.

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HONORING SPURGEON — Midwestern Seminary remodeled its former chapel into the Spurgeon Library, to consolidate and showcase the collection appropriately. The library, which features Spurgeon's pulpit at the entrance, was dedicated in October 2015. (BP photo courtesy of Midwestern Seminary)

Website opens Spurgeon's life to study around world

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP and local reports) — A website expected to hold the largest digitized collection on the Internet of writings by famed British pastor Charles H. Spurgeon is now available.

Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., in partnership with LifeWay Christian Resources' B&H Academic division in Nashville, launched the website on June 21 at spurgeon.org/spurgeon-center.

Also known as The Spurgeon Archive, Midwestern Seminary's original Spurgeon Center website has been combined with spurgeon.org which was founded and donated by Phil Johnson, the executive director of Grace to You in Panorama City, Ca., the ministry of pastor and evangelist John MacArthur.

The Spurgeon site will consist of accessible sermons, writings, links, and a number of other Spurgeon-related documents. The site invites readers to check back weekly for additional sermons and other resources.

"We view this website as a resource available to the local church that makes visible the life, legacy, and library of Charles Spurgeon," Midwestern President Jason Allen said. "Our ultimate goal is to make Spurgeon's works accessible to the world in a way that has never been done before. This site does just that."

In addition to facsimiles of sermons that visitors can search through, the site will also feature a regularly-scheduled blog by Spurgeon Library



SPURGEON

curator Christian George. There are also links highlighting Spurgeon's Daily Meditations, where guests can access his morning and evening readings for each day of the year as well as Spurgeon's commentary on Psalms entitled, *The Treasury of David*; *The Sword and Trowel* magazine; and artifacts from the library.

"The heartbeat of this website is to make Jesus Christ shine through Spurgeon," George said. "We are uploading a treasure chest of sermons, commentaries, Puritan writings, and preaching helps designed to encourage pastors and edify the church."

"My prayer is that God will use the same books that shaped Spurgeon to shape new generations of Christians throughout the world."

George, who is in the process of publishing the 12-volume

Lost Sermons of C.H. Spurgeon series, noted there are plans to add a discussion/interactive element to the site, which he hopes will bring scholars together.

"Spurgeon scholarship is a growing field," George said. "There's so much we are still learning. Our desire is to create a hub for pastors, doctoral students, Spurgeon enthusiasts, and anyone interested in contributing to the field. Collaboration will be key to constructing a three-dimensional portrait of the pastor."

Midwestern Seminary purchased C.H. Spurgeon's personal library from William Jewel College in 2006. The collection consists of more than 6,000 books and hundreds of artifacts, letters, and assorted materials.

In 2014, Midwestern Seminary established the Charles Spurgeon Center for Biblical Preaching, which includes the Spurgeon Scholars initiative that offers a limited number of scholarships to exceptional, full-time residential students called to pastoral ministry.

Additionally, each fall semester the Center hosts The Spurgeon Lectures. Notable evangelical leaders such as John MacArthur, R. Albert Mohler Jr., Mark Dever, and Alistair Begg have delivered the lectures.

A \$2.5 million gift from Bill and Connie Jenkins of Paoli, In., enabled Midwestern to remodel its former chapel into the Spurgeon Library. The library was dedicated in October 2015.

RETIREES

cont. from p. 1

school bus. Milking Blackie the cow, for instance.

"She gave about a gallon," Baker recalls with a twinkle in his eye. "Well, she didn't give it. You had to take it."

Those chores developed discipline and muscles in Baker, the seventh of 14 children. He grew stronger carrying his handicapped sister to school. She weighed about the same as the field pack he later carried during two years in the U.S. Army, he recalls.

Small and wiry, "I had the fastest feet in the county," he adds. In school races, he would leave other runners half a block behind. The quickest girl in the county, he discovered, was named Ruth. She would later become Baker's beloved wife of 64 years and the mother of their three children.

Farming didn't work out for Baker as a young family man, so he tried his hand at shipyard work in Newport News, Va. Then he hired on at the Amoco Oil refinery in nearby York County.

"Refinery work," he says, "was tough, interesting and dangerous." The dangerous part didn't much appeal to him as a husband and father, but he persevered and advanced on the job.

"Miss Ruth" was always waiting at home with a smile even when he came in after midnight, dirty and exhausted from another long shift.

"I had as much support as I needed from day one," he remembers. "My darling always sent me away with a hug and a kiss. I never left home without it."

Baker's spiritual turning point came the day a serious fire broke out at the refinery. He helped quench it and gave the lives of a number of men on

"It's a ministry that is often ignored. The help is more than a dollar. It's knowing that somebody cares."

Robert Baker
retired pastor

the scene. While they celebrated survival, he sensed the voice of God: "That's what I want you to do with your life," he remembers the voice saying. "I want you to spread My Word that men may live."

Baker knew he had been called to preach the Gospel. "That fire served as the ignition point for me," he says. When he got home and told his wife he had been called to ministry, she sobbed softly for a while. Then she smiled and said, "I've been knowing that for months."

That was 1964. The Bakers picked up and drove to Fort Worth, where he attended Southwestern Seminary. He went on to serve as pastor or associate pastor of five churches in North Carolina and Virginia, most recently Spring Hill Church near his current home in Cobbs Creek, Va.

He retired from full-time pastoring in 1994 but continued to serve in interim and pulpit supply roles.

"It's all part of the call," he says. "I preach the Bible and I love the folks."

Baker still preaches from time to time, particularly at memorial services for relatives. He also enjoys tending the garden behind his house where he grows collards, kale, and sweet potatoes.

If the rotary tiller breaks down, he remembers how to use a good old-fashioned hoe to till the soil in the hot sun.

Age and medical issues have slowed Baker a bit in recent years. Ruth died sev-

eral years ago. "She's up there now," he says quietly, pointing toward heaven.

His children faithfully check on him, and he can handle most of his living expenses but the "little foxes," as he calls them, of unexpected costs do creep in—needed medical prescriptions, shots, and the like.

"You don't stop living when you retire," he says. "You still have the same needs."

That's where Mission: Dignity, a ministry of GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, comes in.

A monthly stipend from the ministry enables Baker to cover medical expenses and other needs and keep the "little foxes" at bay. After so many years of serving God and caring for people, he appreciates the tangible way Southern Baptists now care for him in his twilight years.

Mission: Dignity Sunday (MDSunday.org) was June 25 in the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was a day to remember and honor retired ministers, workers, and their widows living on low retirement incomes.

It was also a time to give generously to help the nearly 1,800 individuals and couples assisted by the ministry. About seven million dollars is distributed annually, with most of the funding coming from direct gifts of individuals, Sunday School classes, and churches.

Every dollar given provides well-deserved monthly grants, with none of the gifts used for operating expenses.

Mission: Dignity continually reminds Baker of the love and care of his Southern Baptist family, and that gives him the energy to head out to the garden and plant some more greens.

"It's a ministry that is often ignored," he says. "The help is more than a dollar. It's knowing that somebody cares."

PASTORS

cont. from p. 1

Whitten recounted Charles' pastoral ministry experience and commitments to the inerrancy of Scripture and expository preaching. "All of this has given H.B. a vision of what every Southern Baptist pulpit can look like, when we make Jesus Christ the central figure of our preaching and the cross the central factor of our preaching."

SILLS

cont. from p. 2

Whether the book is a missionary's complete biography, an autobiography, or story of an event in missions history, lessons can be learned that will benefit and offer counsel for missions ministry today. Their stories certainly are not authoritative prescriptions for the way missions must be conducted today, but I believe the Lord caused their stories to be preserved for us today and that we would be wise to learn from their hard-won lessons.

There were no other nominees, so current conference president Dave Miller asked the crowd to vote by standing and cheering, and the auditorium erupted in applause.

Steve Swofford, pastor of First Church in Rockwall, Texas, was nominated by Bart Barber, pastor of First Church in Farmersville, Texas, to serve as vice president. He was elected unopposed. There were no nominees for secretary, so Miller explained that per the rules of the conference, incoming president Charles would appoint one.

Listen to their counsel, because "being dead they still speak" and teach us today.

A former missionary, Silles is currently professor of missions and cultural anthropology at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and president of Reaching & Teaching International Ministries (reachingandteaching.org). He is also a former pastor of Woodland Hills Church, Jackson. His commentary, adapted from the SBTS Equip website (equip.sbts.edu), appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published.

Preferred method: news may be submitted electronically to the e-mail address below, and must be included in the message segment of an e-mail form. Secondary method: news may be typewritten or neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper and mailed. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone. Due to ever-present virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments in JPEG format are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. **Hard copy photographs, mailed through the postal service will not be accepted.** Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

There is no guarantee that news items and/or photographs will be published, and unsolicited material will not be acknowledged or returned. All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date. Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. These guidelines are not meant to be exhaustive.

Submit news to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Sean A. Milner, Executive Director
P.O. Box 27
Clinton, MS 39060-0027
(601) 922-2242
www.baptistchildrensvillage.com

GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

JUNE 1-15

HONORS

Ms. Dorothy McCammon
Turkey Creek BC
Ms. Jennifer McCormick
Turkey Creek BC
Mr. & Mrs. Billy (Kathy) Mangold
Mr. & Mrs. Kenny Davis
Mrs. Bridget Mraz
Bobby & Chrystelle Thames
Mr. James Frank Snow
Ms. Patricia Triplett
Mrs. Senita W. Webb
Rev. William B. Webb
Mr. Scott Ziegler
Mr. James Ronald Goodin

JUNE 1-15

MEMORIALS

Rev. H. C. Adams
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Ms. Joan Andrews
Ms. Sosie Tedder
Aunt, brother, and nephew of Mr. & Mrs. Philip Ables
Mrs. Hershel G. Turner
Ms. Nona Bailey
Bovina BC
Ms. Rebecca Baldwin
Mr. & Mrs. James S. Pilgrim
Mr. Jim Bates
Mr. & Mrs. Byron Dean
Mr. Earl Blanchard
Mr. & Mrs. Charles L. Grant
James R. Bridger
Mrs. Bobbie Bridges and Family
Ms. Martha Ann Nelson Brown
Ms. Debbie S. Eldridge
Ms. Dorothy Brunson
Mrs. Howard M. Vaughn
Ms. Molly Brunson

Mrs. Howard M. Vaughn
Mrs. C. M. Day
Dr. Larry H. Day
Mr. Curtis Glenn "Buddy" Deason
Wade & Lovie McGlothlin
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Leach
McCool BC
Mr. Mike Donaldson
Dr. & Mrs. Harold Ward
Mrs. Merle Easterling
Mr. & Mrs. Reece Douglas, Jr.
Mrs. Frankie Farmer
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Father of Mr. Covert D. Henry
Mr. & Mrs. Covert Henry
Father of Mrs. Betty C. Henry
Mr. & Mrs. Covert Henry
Mr. Veottis Ferguson
Dr. & Mrs. Harold Ward
Mr. Gene Fulton
Mr. & Mrs. Clifton Porter
Mr. Gregory Stephen Galloway
Mr. & Mrs. Vaughn Galloway
Mr. Scott Goodnight
Mr. & Mrs. Ernest L. Scruggs
Ms. Lee Griffin
Mrs. Marjorie M. Carter
Mr. George Gunn
Mr. & Mrs. Charles W. Renfrow
Mrs. Anna Lee Ham
The J. M. Shows, Jr. Family
Mrs. Charlie Hammond
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mrs. Rebecca Hammons
Mrs. Hershel G. Turner
Mr. Claude Hardin Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Rodney Bevil
Mrs. Elaine Herring
Mr. W. B. Herring
Mr. Clark Howell
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mrs. Frances Hurl
Mr. & Mrs. Larry A. Williams
Mrs. Christine Jones
Mrs. Hershel G. Turner
Mrs. Edwina Jordan
Revette Farms

Ms. Bonnie Revette
Ms. Virginia Kirk
Arlington BC
Mr. Robert Kolle
Mr. & Mrs. Parrish Sibley
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Blalock SSC, FBC Clinton
Mrs. Mary Lee Lynch
Mr. & Mrs. Arty Finkelberg
Mr. Truman Manning
Jimmie Lingle, Opal, Gertrude & Homer
Mr. Rudolph Massey
Mr. & Mrs. Terry E. Champion
Ms. Claudene Spears May
Mr. & Mrs. Herman L. Dungan
Mrs. Gladys McCrory
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mr. Johnny McLeod
Mrs. Joe D. Roberts
Lt. Col. James Howard Mixon
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mr. & Mrs. Tom & Lillie Mae Barlow

Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth B. Walker
Aubrey Nessin
Lucy Keen SSC, New Prospect BC

Mr. Robert A. "Bob" Newman
Ms. Debbie S. Eldridge
Ms. Mildred Ogg
Mount Olive BC
Mr. & Mrs. J. V. Parker
Mr. & Mrs. Michael W. Parker
Mrs. Martha Phelps
Mr. & Mrs. Mike Wilson and Abbey

Ms. Frances Pickett
Mr. & Mrs. Pat Conerly
Mr. Ike Presley
Ms. Tina Presley
Mr. Ike Cooper Presley
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Mr. Mel Raridon
Mr. & Mrs. Jimmy Jenkins
Mr. Bennie B. Robbins
Ms. Amy Bubar
Eris Rowley
Holly Springs BC Youth Group
Ms. Ann Yerger Simpson
Tripp & Carrie Henderson
Mrs. Mildred Smith
Dr. & Mrs. Roy W. Daughdrill
Ms. Rose Marie Smith
Tinsley BC
Ms. Annie Louise Sullivan
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Mr. & Mrs. Billy Brunson
Mrs. C. P. Winters
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Mrs. Earlene Woods
Mrs. Dot Griffin and Family



PINE FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH IN COL- LINSVILLE hosted Galactic Starveyors Vacation Bible School June 5-9, 2017 from 8am-11:45am each day. During VBS, the church raised paper products and collected a daily offering in support of the Baptist Children's Village. During commencement on Friday, June 9, Interim Pastor Wayne Edwards and VBS co-directors Keely Followay and Marie Roberts presented Baptist Children's Village Executive Director Sean Milner with a check for \$2,350.30, as well as more than 100 paper product donations. Bro. Wayne donned an astronaut suit during commencement after it was revealed that the boys lost the "girls vs. boys" daily offering challenge as given by the church.

Mr. & Mrs. Mike Monroe of **EAST COLUMBIA BAPTIST CHURCH IN MARION COUNTY** grew and donated potatoes for The BCV ministry.

BCV EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY IN NORTH MISSISSIPPI

The BCV employs Christian, mission-minded, husband and wife teams, without dependent children or pets, to serve in the position of Houseparents. The couples must be mature Christian adults with personal integrity, character and of good reputation with standards and ethics expected of any member of The Baptist Children's Village staff.

They receive a salary with benefits and are provided a private bedroom and meals while on duty. The primary job responsibility of Houseparents is to maintain a home-like environment that models healthy, Christian family living for children and youth residents. They are the primary caregivers and help with everything from transportation and homework to laundry and meals when on duty.

Houseparent responsibilities are varied and somewhat dependent upon which campus and to which cottage the couple is assigned. However, all Houseparents need to be in good physical, mental and emotional health. They must be cooperative and comfortable working in a team environment.

To apply for the current Houseparent openings, please contact Celeste Cade at ccade@baptistchildrensvillage.com or 601-922-2242.

A complete job description and application may be downloaded at www.baptistchildrensvillage.com.

His Presence • Psalm 84

The sons of Korah, authors of Psalm 84, would have been great fans of the ministry of our modern day Maranatha Singers. Both groups focused their worshipful efforts on putting words and music together to describe their love for the House of the Lord and the Lord of the House.

Along with Moses and Aaron, the sons of Korah were descended from the priestly tribe of Levi. The sons of Korah led worship in the temple in Jerusalem. They were also designated as keepers of the temple gates. First Chronicles 9 describes the duties of the gatekeeper.

Longing to be in the presence of the Lord in worship draws us to a physical place of worship. In the Old Testament, the tent of meeting was the place where Moses met with God. On Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments as well as "blueprints" for the tabernacle in the wilderness. Encouraged by his father David as guided by the Lord, King Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem. In the New Testament, John's gospel tells us that Jesus, The Word of God, became flesh and dwelt ("tabernacled") among us. Today, we worship together with our church families inside a physical structure we call the church building. Because of Cal-

vary, the church is much more than a building. Each believer is declared to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. God is with you. Your heart is His dwelling place.

Psalm 84 is picture window into the heart of a searching, seeking worshipper who deeply desires to be in the presence of the Lord. Some have said this is the story of a pilgrim who has been unable to make the journey to Jerusalem for the required feast days.

Others have suggested that this is a step by step journey of a pilgrimage to the very gates of the temple of the Lord. Whatever your perspective, we are witnessing one who knows the Lord intimately and loves the Lord immensely. We are observing one who has memorized the journey map and counted the steps along the way. As we read Psalm 84, we are privileged to be in on a personal conversation between a worshipper and his Lord. I want to be this person. I want to love the Lord like that.



Explore the Bible with Becky Brown

I love music. This Psalm is written for (or dedicated to) the choir director. No one knows his/her name. The "Gittith" is mentioned. No one seems to know if that is the name of a person or a particular holiday or a place name. Possibly "the gittith" was the name of a musical instrument. The guitar player in me hopes it might be some sort of stringed instrument or special tuning pattern.

Based on his love for the Lord, this writer loves the temple. His soul longingly yearns to be there. His heart and his flesh sing in joyful harmony to the living God. He loves the Lord from the inside out! As he gazes at the massive structure, he spots the nest of a bird near the altar of sacrifice. He wants to be that bird! He wants to "nest" near the Lord. Nest rhymes with rest. When he is away, he wants to be there. When he arrives there, he doesn't want to leave. Do you love the Lord and the house of the Lord like that? The Lord is his SONG.

Based on his familiarity with landmarks on the path to Jerusalem, this writer needs no trail guide. His joy-filled heart is the necessary fuel for the journey. On his way to Zion, he is certain to pass through the valley of weeping. Every step is a potential "cry-sis" moment. He moves from strength to strength. The Lord is his STRENGTH.

Based on his respect and honor for the reigning king of Jerusalem, this writer offers prayers to the God of Jacob on behalf of God's anointed ruler. Centuries later, Jesus will be the ultimate Anointed One who will rule over all kingdoms. The Lord is his SUPPLICATION.

Based on his previous opportunities for worship and service, this writer would be content to simply stand on the threshold of the house of God. He would rather be there for one day than a thousand days at any other location. The Lord is his SANCTUARY. Sustaining sun. Protecting shield. Saving grace. Unspeakable glory. Full provision. Trust rewarded with blessing. The Lord is his SOLE SALVATION...SELAH.

Brown is staff evangelist, First Church, Richland.

Share Christ • John 1:35-49

"You can count the apples on the tree, but who can count the apples in a seed?" goes the old aphorism. The same thought can be captured in today's text. One person meets Jesus and then, through a chain of events, others are brought to salvation. Often, the thought of my own salvation grips my heart. To think that centuries ago Jesus lived in an obscure corner of the earth and through a long chain of events, His story reached my corner of the earth. Someone loved Jesus enough to share His message with the people that eventually shared it with me. I am grateful that the story of Jesus never grew stagnant but kept moving around the globe until it finally reached my heart.

John 1 records this scene being played out within a smaller context. John the Baptist was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. Two times in this chapter he is recorded pointing other towards Jesus (vs. 29, 36). John has disciples just as Jesus did that hung on his every word. Two of those followers took John's advice and went to "behold" Jesus. Upon investigating, they too became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. The King of Israel had appeared and this was news worth sharing.

Worth sharing with yourself (1:35-39)

Andrew and another follower of John (many, including this writer,

believe this to be John the apostle) go and spend time with Jesus (1:39) and discover the truth of Jesus for themselves. There is no use sharing a message that you do not believe to be true. Andrew had to find the good news in order to give it away. Imagine the opportunity to spend time with Jesus. What questions these two must have had answered. The words of Jesus were convincing, for from that day forward all we know of Andrew was his heart to share (Jn 6:8, 12:22).

Worth sharing with your family (1:40-45)

Once the good news of Jesus roots itself in Andrew's heart, his first response is to share that news. The scene is moving: he looks at home, at his boat, perhaps in a local eating house. "Has anyone seen my brother," he would have asked. Jesus had turned out to be a treasure too good to hoard and the first person Andrew runs to is his brother. Was this because his brother was a model citizen and lived for God al-

ready? Probably not. Andrew knew his brother, warts and all, and refused to overlook his own family's need for the gospel.

Worth sharing with others (1:46-49)

Philip has the same reaction to Jesus as Andrew. He too knows that Jesus is to be shared and he seeks out a skeptical seeker in Nathaniel (Bartholomew). Spending one's days sitting under a fig tree (vs. 48) is liking to sitting around a coffee shop in our day discussing world events. Nathaniel was a questioner who was looking for the great answers to life's big questions. Philip knew

this and made a bee-line to reveal, as did Andrew earlier in vs. 41, "We have found Him!" This is a joyous phrase. If you were to pan for gold and find a large nugget you would scream, "Eureka!" This is the Greek equivalent for "We have found." You want everyone to know your good fortune. Even those who are skeptical and tainted with prejudices (vs. 46).

Bible Studies for Life

with Clay Anthony



Live It Out

For any believer, living this scene out should come natural. For a member of an SBC church, sharing Jesus should be second nature. Sadly, it is not for many. We face obstacles to our evangelism efforts and refuse to admit that many are of our own making. Do not let the words of Philip to Nathaniel be lost on you. He would not stop with just an introduction to Jesus. He presented a challenge for this man to, "Come and see." (vs. 46b)

Philip did not ask Nathaniel's opinion. He told Nathaniel to come and meet Jesus. Was that too forward? Did Philip not understand modern outreach techniques such as life-style evangelism or social media invites? Perhaps Philip understood something the modern church has long forgotten concerning the Gospel. There is a sense of urgency in Philip's words, as well as Andrew's earlier. These men knew that family, friends, and anyone else they encountered must meet Jesus. The good news that they shared still resonates in the heart of the lost today. It is just as powerful and its sharing is just as important.

Anthony is director of the Collaborative Missionary Network, Oxford/Holly Springs.

The Creator • Psalm 95

Our Psalmist for this week is Mister Anonymous which points us directly to the True Author of the Word of God. The first seven verses are a pleading call to praise and worship the Lord. The last four verses quote the Author and remind us of the history of Israel as they initiated their journey of wilderness wandering with blatant, rebellious, intentional disobedience.

FIRST, come together and praise Yahweh. Sing joyfully to him. Shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Come before His face (into His presence) with thanksgiving. Shout joyfully to Him using psalms which are songs accompanied by instruments.

WHY? Our Lord is the one true and great God. He is a great King. All other gods (little "g") are made with human hands and are only idols. He is our Creator. He made this tiny pebble called Earth by His word (in Genesis) and formed it with His hands. He made the seas, the depths of which even our modern technologies have not plumbed.

SECOND, come together to worship the Lord and bow down as we kneel before our Maker. God is sovereign over all things and over all people. He rules and reigns with complete authority. He stands in the solitude of Himself. He has no equals. He has no rivals. He alone is worthy of worship and praise.

WHY? The Lord is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of his hand. The created ones fall before the One Who made them and brought them forth for worship. We are not left alone to fend for ourselves. Like sheep, we follow a great and merciful Shepherd who cares for our needs day after day.

THIRD, stop and listen to the Lord as He speaks. Refuse to harden your hearts against God. Remember the

way the children of Israel treated God and Moses, the servant and friend of God. From four hundred years of bondage in Egypt,

God delivered His people as He had promised Abraham through binding covenant. Signs, wonders and plagues finally got the attention of Pharaoh and his advisors. The people of God were brought to safety through the Red Sea. They received manna in the morning and quails in the evening by God's special delivery service. In spite of all God had accomplished and provided for them, they remained grum-

bling numblers and mumbling grumblers. So sad. So typical. So it is, still today...

WHY? The people of God had a terminal heart condition. They were "errorists" from the inside out. Their hearts were not truly devoted to the God of their deliverance and their provision. Shortly after the miracle of the parting of the Red Sea (Exodus 14), the people arrived at a place in the wilderness that had no water (Exodus

17). After all God had done, audaciously they quarreled and questioned if He was even with them at all. What an affront to the Lord

of their deliverance!! The place was named Massah (question) and Meribah (quarrel). God used Moses to perform another miracle. Water poured from the rock of Mt. Horeb (Sinai).

Their ears were closed when they should have been open. Their mouths were open when they should have been closed. Their hearts were hard and cold when they should have been pliable and receptive. Such gross disobe-

dience would not go unnoticed by Holy God. That whole generation would perish during the forty years of wilderness wandering. Two men, Joshua and Caleb, followed the Lord fully. They would be the only ones to enter Canaan, the land of promised rest.

This anonymous worship leader calls us to evaluate our worship posture as we consider our worship purpose. The One True God/Sovereign Creator deserves our complete focus and honor as we come into His presence in worship and in prayer and in praise. Kneeling as we bow down helps us to offer ourselves to the Lord. We always depart having received the greater blessing.

Christmas 1988 was spent in Israel with my folks who were missionaries there with the International Mission Board. On Sabbath morning, my dad preached from Psalm 95. I had the precious privilege of singing for that worship service. My outline for that message described two groups of people: Singers and Strayers. Singers rejoice to worship. Strayers refuse to worship. That day, I determined to be a worship leader. After deeper study, I want to be a worship leader like Mister Anonymous.

Brown is staff evangelist, First Church, Richland.



Explore the Bible
with Becky Brown

Encourage One Another • Acts 11:19-26

The position I serve offers a unique opportunity to see all parts of church life. Some of the reports I hear are not too uplifting. Pastors are too busy. Churches are too empty. Baptisms are in decline. Such news can serve as a catalyst for gloom. Yet there are moments of joy when a church family seems to be doing what God intended them to do. Those reports serve as a source of encouragement and they happen more than you know.

In today's text, a member of the early church was able to be a part of one of those joyous reports. Joseph was known as an encouraging soul within the church. Acts 4:36 says that he was such a giver that the early church nicknamed him "Barnabus," which means son of encouragement. Ever thought about what fellow church members would nickname you if given the chance? This man had a large heart and that fact led to him being sent as an emissary to areas west of Israel to investigate the growth of the early church. What he found was pure encouragement.

People were following Christ (vs. 19-21)

The last part of vs. 20 says that as the early church was scattered, they went to new places and were "preaching Christ." As the story of Jesus was spreading, people were responding. This work of evangelism was being reported all the

way back in Jerusalem, spurning Barnabus' investigative trip. What encouragement he must have felt upon discovering that the message of Jesus that he heard was now being accepted by others. The death of Stephen had brought persecution (vs. 19) and because of that persecution the good news was spreading. Surely this brought encouragement to the larger early church membership.

People were growing in Christ (vs. 22-24)

New converts were now spread out from Jerusalem and needed instruction. What a visitor to receive but the one known for his encouragement? Barnabus instructs them to grow in their walk with Jesus by "remaining faithful... with steadfast purpose." (vs. 23) Barnabus understood that the conversion was not the finish line of the Christian walk but the beginning. Once these people believe in Jesus he knew that their lives were marked. The persecution that is mentioned earlier (vs. 19) was now going to include them as well. Their pur-

pose was now wrapped up in knowing Jesus and making Him known to those around them. They were encouraged to never wain from that one purpose.

People were serving Christ (vs. 25-26)

Now that these people have been converted and seeing that their sanctification process had begun, Barnabus knew that other voices of encouragement were needed. What better voice than that of the new convert Saul? Here was a man with the intelligence to answer

their questions and the resolve to face any level of persecution. Saul had many avenues full of encouragement on which to serve these

people. Saul's presence was so needed that we are told that Barnabus took it his own time and effort to search for Saul in Tarsus. (vs. 25)

A year was spent teaching these new converts in the way of Christ. (vs. 26) This investment of a yearlong seminary education would serve to encourage two groups. First, the learners. What would you ask the Apostle Paul to ex-

plain if given the chance? How much Bible knowledge could you learn in a year's time studying with the one that wrote half of the New Testament? Second, this report as well made it back in Jerusalem. The members of the early church, including the Apostles, would have heard how the teaching of Jesus had spread and taken root. Their work and lives were not for naught.

Live It Out

Look around your church. Who is it there that needs encouragement in their walk with Jesus? Everyone has a story and many times that story has its gloomy parts. Investigate these stories and how you can help. Start a ministry of encouragement right where you are located. Your church needs you.

Within your church, is there one that you could nickname "Encourager?" Who is it that you would label as a Barnabus to your faith family? If there is not one, guess who can be one? You. Invest in the lives around you. Senior citizens make good a Barnabus but need one too. Single mothers? Teens from broken homes? Children with absentee parents? Your pastor? We all need encouragement. Every church needs a Barnabus.

Anthony is director of the Collaborative Missionary Network, Oxford, Holly Springs.

Bible Studies for Life
with Clay Anthony



Messengers pass resolutions in Phoenix

PHOENIX (BP) — Messengers to the 2017 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting passed resolutions June 13 repenting of prayerlessness and calling for leaders to practice biblical morality, before deciding late at night to vote June 14 on a previously-rejected proposal denouncing the "alt-right" movement.

The approved resolutions covered some hot-button theological and moral issues, but the proposed resolution on the "alt-right" — a movement that supports white nationalism — garnered the most attention.

The Resolutions Committee chose not to report out the proposal to messengers. An effort by the resolution's author to bring the alt-right measure to the floor failed in the afternoon session, and a motion by another messenger in the evening session also fell short. Each motion required a two-thirds majority, and the evening vote received only 58% approval.

However, the committee reconvened during the evening and asked the Committee on Order of Business for time June 14 to present a new alt-right resolution, chief parliamentarian Barry McCarty told messengers. The Committee on Order of Business approved, McCarty said. Messengers then approved the resolutions unanimously or nearly unanimously.

Messengers also voted in favor of all nine resolutions they received from the committee with unanimous or nearly unanimous votes. In those resolutions, messengers:

- Confessed as sin any lack of prayer and called on Southern Baptists to commit to at least 15 minutes a day of prayer and regular fasting as they are able, as well as petitions to God to grant revival and the salvation of millions of people.

- expressed gratitude for leaders who live consistently moral lives, urged all leaders to abide by God's moral standards, and pledged prayer for the country's leaders to resist temptation.

- reaffirmed the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement — which says Jesus took upon Himself in His death the divine punishment due sinners — "as the burning core of the Gospel message and the only hope of a fallen race."

- denounced Planned Parenthood's "immoral agenda and practices," in addition to urging all government defunding and commending the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) for making federal removal of money for the country's leading abortion provider a priority in its legislative agenda.

- called for Southern Baptists and other Christians not to participate "in the sin of gambling," encouraged pastors and convention leaders to continue to teach Southern Baptists about the deceptiveness of gambling, and urged government at all levels to halt state-sponsored gambling.

- urged Southern Baptists to pray for and invest in evangelism and discipleship efforts with college students and strengthen the relationship between parachurch campus ministries and local churches.

- voiced gratitude to God on the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation for its courageous leaders and urged recommitment to its convictions while advocating for religious liberty for all.

- offered thanks on the 100th anniversary of the SBC Executive Committee and commended the entity for its promotion of the Cooperative Program, the convention's unified giving plan.

- Expressed gratitude to God, as well as Southern Baptists in the Phoenix area and all others who helped with this year's meeting.

Reporting the resolution on prayer as the first matter for messengers to consider was significant, said Barrett Duke, resolutions committee chairman, in a news conference afterward. That resolution included some "very specific language" for Southern Baptists, he said.

When asked by a reporter about the absence of U.S. President Donald Trump's name from the resolution on moral leadership, Duke said, "There was no need to single out President Trump or anyone else. We simply believe the resolution stands on its own without



APPROVED — Messengers raise their ballots June 14, to approve a request by the Resolutions Committee to present a resolution on "the anti-Gospel alt-right: white supremacy movement" on June 14, on the last day of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting at the Phoenix Convention Center. (BP photo)

bringing particular characters into it."

Trump's multiple marriages and past actions toward and comments about women were subjects of concern among Southern Baptists and others during the 2016 U.S. presidential election, although many Southern Baptist church members voted for him in November.

Regarding the measure on gambling, Duke said "We looked back, and we noticed that we never in the past have actually labeled gambling as a sin in that kind of explicit way."

ERLC President Russell Moore described the resolution on penal substitutionary atonement as "very well-worded, reflecting the viewpoint of the Baptist Faith & Message [the SBC's statement of faith] and in a context where penal substitutionary atonement has been the subject of a hot debate in recent years."

He told reporters it was a "very appropriate word for this convention to speak to the fact that we believe, as the book of Romans teaches, that God is both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus through the atoning sacrifice of Christ."

After the approval of all nine resolutions, Texas pastor Dwight McKissic

moved to bring his proposal on the alt-right movement to messengers. McKissic, pastor of Cornerstone Church in Arlington, asked that the SBC "would go on record to abate darkness that's invading our nation right now."

Many "alt-right" members claim to be Southern Baptists, he said.

McKissic's motion failed to receive the two-thirds majority required. In explaining why the committee did not report out McKissic's resolution, Duke told reporters afterward that the panel spent a number of hours considering the proposal "before we finally said we just didn't see a way that we could speak to the multiple issues that were raised in that resolution in a way that we felt would be constructive."

Duke said the committee agreed with the resolution's point on racism, but thought that and other "elements [in the proposal] already had been addressed recently" in Southern Baptist life.



DUKE



MCKISSIC

'Historic' LGBT protest fizzles at annual meet



CROSSING PATHS — A messenger (left) to the 2017 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Phoenix talks on June 13 to a protester with Faith in America outside the Phoenix Convention Center. (BP photo)

PHOENIX (BP and local reports) — A protest that an LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) advocacy group had billed as "historic" was hardly noticeable on the opening day of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Phoenix, bystanders said.

About 50 people appeared to join in Faith in America's (FIA) protest asking the SBC to remove homosexuality and transgenderism from the "sin list." They distributed flyers and engaged messengers in conversation outside the Phoenix Convention Center before dispersing around 1 p.m., bystanders told Baptist Press (BP). The exact number of protesters was difficult to judge, as they were separated in groups of two or so and blended in with passersby, witnesses said.

FIA flyers incorporated the SBC 2017 logo and language without permission, reading "For such a time as this: Save yOur Kids!" followed by the "Pray for Such a Time as This" annual meeting logo. The annual meeting Scriptures Luke 11:1 and Esther 4:14 were clearly visible.

In addition to protesters, an FIA mobile billboard continued to quietly circle the block adjacent to the convention center's North Hall, where the annual meeting was held. The billboard cited a statistic that 40% of homeless teens in the U.S. are LGBT, and invited messengers to a free meal at 6:30 p.m. at the nearby Hyatt Regency Hotel.

Chas Rowland, pastor of Bovina Church, Bovina, in a Facebook post described his encounter with a protestor on his way inside the building. "While walking into the convention center, Clay, one of the protesters, approached me. We talked for about 15 minutes. By the time our conversation was over about three to four news cameras had gathered and were filming our conversation."

"I told Clay and those gathered around and those watching the video from the cameras about Jesus and His love for us, and the image of God in him

and every other individual, and how we can be reconciled to Him. I told him the most loving thing I can do is tell my kids what the Bible says, just like I was telling him the truth out of love and not hate."

"It was a good conversation. Clay softened as we talked and listened a lot more than I expected. He is a nice young man, but he needs Jesus. I pray Clay heard the truth, repents of his sin, and trusts in Jesus. Before I left, I prayed for Clay."

FIA markets itself as a non-profit group founded in 2006 "to end decades and centuries of using religious teachings to justify marginalizing and discriminating against others," and is "dedicated to influencing media and faith community narratives on religion and sexuality."

In a May 31 press release prior to the annual meeting, FIA co-founder and co-chair Mitchell Gold said it would be a "historic moment."

"This is not about conflict and division. It is about speaking the truth, and standing up for our kids and teens being hurt," he said in May. "It is also about finding common ground around our children and youth."



ROWLAND